

We then departed on a 45-minute flight to Istanbul where we were greeted by Peter Barte, our State Department control officer.

In Istanbul, we visited the Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, and the Grand Bazaar with Filiz Ozer, Professor of Art History and Architecture at Istanbul Technical University and Sevil Sezen, Cultural Affairs Specialist, U.S. Consulate General.

POLAND

The morning of Sunday, August 26, we traveled to Warsaw, Poland and were met by David Van Cleve, First Secretary, United States Embassy of Poland.

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to tour Warsaw, specifically the areas related to Warsaw's WWII and Jewish history. We toured old town Warsaw, which was rebuilt after World War II to its original beauty, the monument to the Warsaw Uprising and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, commemorating the Jews who fought against the Nazis. We then visited the Jewish cemetery, with more than 200,000 graves including many who perished in World War II.

That evening we had dinner with Ambassador Victor Ashe, Senator Shelby, and Embassy and Senate staff at the Ambassador's residence.

On August 27, we visited the Warsaw Rising Museum, a unique museum that examines Poland in WWII, specifically the Polish uprising and the Home Army. The facility is extremely interactive with a recreated sewer system, which the Polish Home Army used to travel through Warsaw and evade the Nazis. The facility also had a number of documents from that time including a pamphlet that was air dropped in Warsaw encouraging the Home Army to wear markings that would indicate that they are part of an army, so that the Nazis could be prosecuted for war crimes by the United States.

I was particularly impressed with the story of Tadeusz Ruman, a member of a flight crew that dropped supplies in Warsaw to aid the Home Army. During the flight, their plane suffered heavy damages from attacks and lost two engines. After the drop of the supplies they had to pass over mountains, which they only cleared by a few feet. After taking attacks and injuries, the crew made it to Brindisi, Italy, however, upon landing they realized that their brakes had been damaged and were unable to stop. Taking quick action they were able to steer the B-24 Bomber into vines and rocks to bring the plane to a stop, a harrowing tale that displayed the effort that the Allies made to assist the Polish Home Army.

I was then briefed by Ambassador Victor Ashe, Deputy Chief of Mission Kenneth Hillas, Political Counselor Mary Curtin, Economic Counselor Richard Rorving, Counsel General Philip Min, Public Affairs Counselor Ed Kulakowski, Defense Attache Col. Richard Runner, and FBI Attache Jay Bienkowski. The Polish economy is doing very well with annual increases of 6 percent. While this is below the increases of Russia and other Baltic countries it is very encouraging given the stable market environment in Poland for businesses, which is not as strong in those other countries.

The relationship between the United States and Poland is strong with left and right wing political groups, despite the opposition to the Iraq war. The proposed missile defense system in Poland is a point of ongoing discussions, with Polish representatives desiring to speed up discussions. Poland is putting forward a number of troops to assist the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, with 900 in Iraq and 1,200 in Afghanistan. While Poland is looking to reduce the number of troops in Iraq, they may consider increasing the number in Afghanistan.

I was scheduled to meet with Foreign Minister Anna Fotyga, but could not do so because we left Wednesday early to return to the U.S. to attend the funeral of a close friend. I spoke to her by phone. I informed her of the United States' appreciation for Poland sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. I asked for her assessment of having the United Nations involved in Iraq and if Poland would consider sending additional troops to Iraq if it was under the United Nations banner. She replied that she would have to defer to the President, Prime Minister, and Minister of Defense on that issue.

I met with Andrzej Duda, Deputy Minister of Justice, a impressive 35-year-old gentleman. We discussed the prosecutorial system in Poland which is similar to the United States as Prosecutors are responsible for cases in a geographical area. Prosecutors are required to graduate from law school, serve a 3-year internship with a senior Prosecutor, and then pass an exam.

I asked the Deputy Minister about crime in Poland. He informed me that there are several hundred murders a year in Poland, but less than one thousand. He also informed me of the decreasing juvenile crime problem in Poland. While juvenile crime is still a problem the improving economy of Poland is increasing wages and employment, providing youth with quality jobs. Poland as a member of the European Union does not have the death penalty and has not used it since 1987.

I then questioned him about the use of terrorism and wiretapping in Poland. The Deputy Minister noted that he has not been involved in any terrorism cases, though the Ministry is working with the United States on this important issue. He believes wiretapping is a critical tool against crime. When I asked him about the ability of government official's ability to use wire tapping without a judge's approval he stated that it was not possible.

FRANCE

We departed for Paris, France that evening, where we were met by our Control Officer Kim Khounek and Logistics Control Officer Chanh Nguyen.

On Wednesday, August 29, we were briefed by Ambassador Craig R. Stapleton at the United States Embassy on a number of issues. We were also joined by Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Pekala, Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, Economic Minister Counselor Stuart Dwyer, Consul General Catherine Barry, Public Affairs Minister Counselor James Bullock, Defense Attache Col. Raymond Hodgkins, Foreign Commercial Service Minister Counselor Raymond Connan, and Head of Office Regional Affairs Michael Altoff.

We discussed new French President Nicolas Sarkozy and what his views will mean to the United States. President Sarkozy wants a culture of success in France. He is seeking to reform the country and make it the leading country in Europe.

President Sarkozy views himself as pro-American, and has stated that he wants to help the United States in Iraq. This is likely to be through economic development and not through placing troops in Iraq. On the possibility of France providing troops for a United Nations military force, there is little optimism. However, there may be an opportunity for France to increase its assistance through NATO by training Iraqi soldiers and policemen.

Regarding Iran, the French support diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from securing nuclear weapons capability. In fact, France may be willing to take actions on this issue outside of the United Nations Security Council.

From the Embassy we departed for Charles De Gaulle International Airport and returned to the United States.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, in the absence of any Senator seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. President, I withdraw that suggestion. I had not noticed the presence of the Senator from Tennessee.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

IRAQ

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise today during morning business to talk about a trip I made to Iraq. I think the Acting President pro tempore made a similar trip during the August recess. I want to make a few points regarding that trip.

I know a lot of people talk about these trips, and they talk about the fact that they are choreographed and short term. I do want to say my comments are in the context of many hours of committee hearings the Acting President pro tempore and I have both sat through in Foreign Relations and Armed Services and many other ways developing the background prior to being in Iraq.

I know, again, much is said of these trips. I will say I do not think there is anything—and the Chair probably would attest to the same—like being there on the ground yourself and seeing firsthand our troops, seeing our military leaders, seeing leaders of the Iraqi Government, and also seeing many of the tribal leaders, the sheiks who actually lead in these various areas throughout the country.

I wish to make three points, and then I wish to urge something in conclusion.

No. 1, I think the Chair would agree with me the professionalism and commitment of our men and women in uniform is absolutely overwhelming. The way they conduct themselves on our behalf would almost lead you to emotion just in seeing the way they do what they do on our behalf. I have noticed that both in State, as I have traveled the State as our men and women prepare, but certainly even more so on the ground there in Iraq. I am indebted to them. I know the Acting President pro tempore and all Americans are indebted to the way they conduct themselves, regardless of how we may feel about the conflict that is underway.

Secondly, I do not think there is any question that we have had military gains on the ground. I realize that is uneven. But I think there is no question what General Petraeus, General Odierno, and others have done on the ground, in beginning the work in a bottoms-up approach, where we work with tribal leaders there on the ground to secure their own areas, is the right approach. I do not think there is any question we are seeing the results of that approach.

It seems as if a light has gone on where, No. 1, the tribal leaders, the sheiks, and others there on the ground are realizing that we are there not as occupiers but we are there as enablers.

We want to enable them to be able to secure their own destiny. We want to leave that country other than providing the basic support they may need on an ongoing basis.

Secondly, the terror, if you will, al-Qaida and some of the other militant groups have wreaked on these villages has caused them to want to band together with us and again try to make sure they do everything they can to cause their villages to be peaceful. For that reason, we no doubt are seeing gains on the ground as it relates to security.

I think the third thing we would all agree with is the central Government itself has not made the gains we would have hoped more security on the ground would have enabled them to do. I think most delegations that went there met with various Iraqi officials. I know I met with both a Shia and a Sunni deputy president there on the ground and talked with them about the lack of benchmarks we had hoped they would all meet.

Obviously, we also are aware the Prime Minister is meeting with the President and two deputy presidents on a daily basis to try to reach some type of reconciliation so they can move forward on these important issues. But the fact is, those benchmarks have not been made in a way that we here in the Government would like to have seen them approached and progress made.

Our soldiers have been outstanding. There is no doubt that military gains on the ground have occurred, and the central Government has not conducted itself in a way that we would have liked to have seen happen.

In the next week or so we are going to see a number of reports, but most important, obviously, to me anyway, is the report General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will put forward. I urge my fellow Senators on the floor to listen to what is going to be said. Obviously, there are people here who have a lot invested in various amendments or proposals, and there is a human trait we want to see our own proposal, if you will, be the one people in the Senate and our country adopt.

But let me state I do not think there is any question that the Petraeus plan is going to discuss redeployments. It is going to discuss bringing men and women home from Iraq based on the successes we have had on the ground in recent months. I do not think there is any question we have seen a change in mission take place on a province-by-province basis. In other words, one of the things we debated heavily in previous debates this year on Iraq was changing the mission of our men and women in uniform. Yet we are seeing this occurring province by province, as tribal leaders are able, working with our military leaders, to take the lead in their own security. So we are seeing that change in mission.

I say to my fellow Senators, let's listen. I think we have an opportunity in the Senate for Democrats and Repub-

licans to come together around a plan that would unify our country in such a way as we are able to bring our country together around what is happening in Iraq. I do not know what the details of the Petraeus plan will be. My guess is he and others today are actually calibrating what the exact redeployment ought to be and what the timing of that ought to be to actually make sure we do not lose the successes we have had on the ground. But my guess is, there will be redeployments, and I think those will be gradual, again, to build on the successes we have had—again, a continual and gradual change in the mission underway in Iraq.

I am of hope, of great hope—and maybe it is my newness to the Senate that gives me this optimism still, but I have great hopes that if we will all listen to the reports that are being given, and not to those people who wish to see us divided, I think we in the Senate have an opportunity to come together around a proposal in Iraq that gives us the opportunity to build on the successes we have had and to change the mission of our men and women so over time what we are doing is basically supporting the operations of the Iraqis as they continue their move ahead, hopefully, toward a more secure Iraq.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2642, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2642) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I believe the Senator from Arizona has a request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Arizona, who has given up his 10 minutes in morning business, be allowed to speak between 2:20 and 2:30 this afternoon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2656

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Mr. REED. Mr. President, on behalf of the Appropriations Committee, I call up an amendment in the form of a committee substitute which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Rhode Island [Mr. REED] proposes an amendment numbered 2656.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am pleased to bring the fiscal year 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and related agencies appropriations bill to the Senate. This is a unique bill for many reasons, not the least of which is it is the first appropriations bill that will be considered under the requirements of S. 1, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. On August 2, 2007, the Senate approved S. 1 by a vote of 83 to 14, clearing the measure for the President's signature. When signed by the President, this ethics reform legislation will significantly improve the transparency and accountability of the legislative process.

Although the White House has requested the Senate not submit the legislation to the President until he returns from his overseas travels, I wish to assure Senators we intend to abide by the requirements of S. 1 during the consideration of this bill. The legislation requires that the chairman of the committee of jurisdiction certify that certain information related to congressionally directed spending be identified and that the required information be available on a publicly accessible congressional Web site in a searchable format at least 48 hours before a vote on the pending bill.

The information required includes identification of the congressionally directed spending and the name of the Senator who requested such spending. This information is contained in the committee report numbered 110-85, dated June 18, 2007, and has been available on the Internet for over 2 months.

In addition, pursuant to the standards required by Chairman BYRD and Senator COCHRAN, letters from each Member with a congressionally directed spending item in this bill or accompanying report are available on the Internet certifying that neither the Senator, nor his or her spouse, has a pecuniary interest in such spending item.

I am submitting for the RECORD the certification by the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: